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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: USE OF MOBILE GROUPS ON THE BORDER

REF: A. 07 ASTANA 3287

[1](#)B. 07 ASTANA 3355

[1](#)1. Summary: The Kazakhstani Border Guard Service (BGS) is interested in establishing mobile border guard groups to combat both trafficking and corruption. End Summary.

[1](#)2. On November 29, Lieutenant-General Nikolai Rybalkin, Deputy Head of the Border Guard Service of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), announced that the Russian Border Guard Service has established special units (similar to SWAT Teams) that will work at the most vulnerable and dangerous parts of the border in order to more effectively fight crime. Currently, such units are operating in Northern Caucasus, at the Kazakhstani-Russian border, and in the Far East. Equipment and arms provided to the Russian mobile special groups allow them to operate both in the mountains and on the sea. The mobility of the groups is an important deterrent to those who may attempt to illegally cross the border. Rybalkin also stated that the FSB will continue creating such units and sending them to other parts of the border.

[1](#)3. During an April 2007 visit to the Kazakhstani-Uzbek border, an INL program manager observed the work of a Kazakhstani mobile group at the Saryagash border checkpoint. The group was made up of several mid-level officers from the Border Guard Division in Saryagash. The mobile group made an unannounced visit to the border checkpoint and participated in passport processing of passengers.

[1](#)4. During last year's annual message to the people, President Nazarbayev stated that the fight against corruption was one of 30 priority tasks of the government. The creation of border guard mobile groups directly addresses this task and will be a powerful weapon in the fight against corruption in the BGS. Because of personnel shortages, the BGS hires former military personnel from the villages near the border as contractors. Though this has solved the basic personnel issue, it has caused concerns. Some entrepreneurs have found that friendships with the border guards help their business. For the contractors, living among the people who cross the border on a daily basis presents opportunities for corruption. The BGS hopes that the use of roving patrols with no ties to the community may help keep its contractors honest.

[1](#)5. Because of several incidents on the border of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in April 2006, members of Parliament visited several villages and spoke with the citizens in order to better understand the causes of the incidents. To their surprise, the deputies heard much more about corruption among the border guards. They were told, for example, that it cost a driver of a commercial freight truck approximately 1,000 tenge (\$8) to pass through temporary "entry points" unofficially opened by border guards.

[1](#)6. The BGS is now planning a pilot project to fully equip and train one mobile group to prevent corruption, stop traffickers and those that illegally cross the border, and perform rescue operations on both land and sea. Post expects to receive a request to fund the

pilot phase. It is not yet clear whether the GOK plans to request assistance from other international donors. If the first mobile group proves its effectiveness, the Border Guard Service will introduce more at the most vulnerable parts of the border. The GOK may be willing to provide the funding to create and support future mobile groups.

¶7. During his trip to the U.S., Deputy Head of the BGS General-Major Berkaliyev was impressed by the operation of the U.S. Border Patrol's BORTAC (tactical) and BORSTAR (search and rescue) teams and requested training from these units (ref A). Such training, especially search and rescue, would be an integral part of the training program for mobile groups.

¶8. The BGS continues to struggle with the openness of the southern border, especially the border with Uzbekistan. One of the most serious problems along the southern border is the narrow and under-protected green zone between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The checkpoints along this border are equipped, staffed, and operating effectively; however, traffickers and illegal migrants have been able to avoid these checkpoints. In other cases, traffickers have been willing to use violent methods to boldly cross through checkpoints, as was the case in December 2007 on the Kazakhstani-Kyrgyz border (ref B). The development of mobile groups will allow the BGS to both patrol the green zone and quickly provide back-up to checkpoints in case of an attack.

¶9. Comment. As the BGS looks forward to strengthening not only border checkpoints but border posts along the green zone, U.S. assistance, training, and experience is needed more than ever. End Comment.

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